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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirty-ninth session

Bonn, Germany

28 June – 8 July 2015

Item 13 of the Agenda: Follow-up to Recommendations of Evaluations and Audits on Working Methods

13B. Feasibility study on an additional ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee

SUMMARY

By its Decision **36 COM 12B**, the Committee decided to assess the feasibility of an ordinary session in October/November 2013, at its 37th session (June/July 2013).

By Decision **37 COM 18B**, the Committee, considering the costs inherent to the holding of an additional ordinary session and the financial situation faced by UNESCO, decided not to hold an additional ordinary session in October/November 2013. By the same Decision, the Committee requested the World Heritage Centre to re-assess the eventual possibility of holding an additional ordinary session in 2015 and to present a report on this issue at its 39th session in 2015.

This document is presented pursuant to Decision **37 COM 18B**.

Draft Decision: 39 COM 13B, see Point III.

I. BACKGROUND

1. On numerous occasions, the World Heritage Committee discussed the holding of additional sessions in the framework of its reflection on its working methods, to allow for a more efficient and effective management of the increased workload of its two ordinary sessions per biennium. For the sake of clarity, only the most recent decisions taken by the Committee in this regard are referred to in the present document.

2. Since its 33rd session, in 2009, the Committee examined in-depth the concept and implications of holding two sessions of the Committee per year, and also examined other options for a more efficient and effective management of the Committee's increasing workload.

3. The Committee, at its 36th session, decided to "*assess the feasibility of an ordinary session in October/November 2013, as requested in its **Decision 35 COM 12B** paragraph 9c, at its 37th session (June/July 2013)*" (For ease of reference, the relevant part of Decision **35 COM 12B** is annexed to the present document).

4. By Decision **37 COM 18B**, the Committee, considering the costs inherent to the holding of an additional ordinary session and the financial situation faced by UNESCO, decided not to hold an additional ordinary session in October/November 2013.

5. By the same Decision, the Committee requested the World Heritage Centre to re-assess the eventual possibility of holding an additional ordinary session of this Committee in 2015 and to present a report on this issue at its 39th session in 2015.

II. FEASIBILITY OF AN ADDITIONAL ORDINARY SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE IN 2015

6. The advantages and disadvantages of an additional annual session of the Committee were examined in detail by the Committee since its 34th session in 2010.

7. The major advantage of holding an additional session of the Committee is that this would decongest the overloaded agenda of its annual sessions and would allow more time for debates and decision making. However, the Committee was also informed of the major disadvantages such a decision would imply, notably in view of the financial constraints UNESCO is facing. In this regard, the Secretariat cannot but reiterate what was already indicated during the 37th session of the Committee, during which this item was last examined, i.e:

- Additional costs - direct and indirect costs - will be doubled by the preparation and holding of an additional session.
- Time should be considered as the most important resource for the organization of an additional session, in addition to direct costs. Indeed, time spent on the technical preparation as well as on the content of the session implies indirect costs (i.e notably staff involvement).
- Due to the heavy workload and the existing statutory deadlines, the Secretariat as well as the Advisory Bodies, are subject to very short timeframes which leave little room for the addition of new statutory dates. It should be reiterated in this regard that, as indicated in all external as well as internal Audit reports, notably regarding management, the workload of the

World Heritage Centre keeps increasing. An additional session will not give the States Parties, Advisory Bodies and Secretariat adequate time to follow-up and implement decisions taken at that session.

- The considerable risk of lack of coherence between the sessions should be taken into account, as each session would deal with different subjects (technical versus administrative and financial) and would call upon different competencies, obliging the States Parties to send different experts to each of the sessions. In this regard, there could be a considerable risk of lack of coordination and losing a view of the overall picture.
- Furthermore, the costs of the ordinary Committee sessions are borne by hosting States Parties to a great extent; in case the Committee wishes to add an additional ordinary session during the years of the General Assembly, the financial resources necessary for that session need to be identified accordingly.

8. Finally, it should be noted that at its 38th session, the Committee adopted Decision **38 COM 5F.1** by which it considered that the annual frequency of its sessions is appropriate.

9. By the same Decision, the Committee also welcomed the recommendation of the Audit of the Working methods of the Cultural Conventions to reduce the frequency, duration and agenda of the sessions. In this regard, it should be noted that a clear reduction of the duration of the session is difficult to implement as it depends mainly on the number of items inscribed on the agenda by Members of the Committee. However, it should also be noted that since 2011, efforts have been made to limit the duration of the sessions. Furthermore, the Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies have greatly reduced the time of presentations of working documents to try to meet such a recommendation. Finally, and with a view to further reducing the duration of each session, the Committee may wish to consider to further rationalizing agendas of future sessions.

10. The Committee may also wish to note that the question of multiple sessions of the Committee is addressed in Document WHC-15/39.COM/15 regarding the Budget, under the part related to the comparative analysis of options for further efficiency and cost saving measures. It should also be noted that this question has been the subject of discussions in several instances, i.e the *ad-hoc* working group on working methods of the evaluation and decision-making process of nomination as well as the consultative body on the Budget and the consultative body on the revision of the Operational Guidelines.

III. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 39 COM 13B

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-15/39.COM/13B,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **36 COM 12B** as well as **37 COM 18B**, adopted at its 36th and 37th sessions respectively;*
3. *Considering the costs inherent to the holding of an additional ordinary session and the financial situation that UNESCO, including its World Heritage Centre, is facing;*

4. *Recalling furthermore Decision **38 COM 5F.1**, by which it considered that the annual frequency of its sessions is appropriate;*
5. *Decides not to hold an additional ordinary session in 2015.*

Working methods of statutory organs of the *Convention*

Extract of Decision: 35 COM 12B

9. Decides that three regular (not extended) sessions of the Committee should be held each biennium as follows:

- a) Even years – host country; agenda: reports, budget, nomination and state of conservation reports,
- b) Odd years – host country; agenda: reports, budget, nomination and state of conservation reports, and
- c) Odd years – UNESCO Headquarters immediately after the General Assembly, (which should be held within the period of UNESCO's General Conference); agenda: strategic and policy issues and as necessary, reports on the state of conservation needing urgent examination;